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ORNAMENTING HOME GROUNDS.

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AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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ORNAMENTING HOME GROUNDS.

W. M. Munson.

A constantly recurring problem in New England, is, How shall we keep the boys on the farm? The answer is not easy, but more people are driven from the farm by its isolation, loneliness and lack of tasteful surroundings than by any other cause. If the boys and girls go away to the academy for a time and get a taste of village or city life, the contrast when they return to the old farm is often too strong.

LOCATION.

In building a new house, consider well its location. Don't build where the old one was simply because the barns are there,—though of course, other things being equal, the barns should be near the house. Healthfulness is of the first importance, so be sure that the location of the residence is such that perfect drainage is secured. Other things being equal, a southern or southeastern aspect is most desirable.

If possible, make use of natural groves or scattering trees and of shelter-belts or wind breaks, and place your buildings near them. Nothing you can plant will be so satisfactory as the native forest trees. If there is not a natural shelter of trees, by all means provide one.

THE LAWN.

A good lawn is the most essential element of beauty in any grounds and in these days of cheap lawn mowers there is no excuse for not having a neat lawn in front of the humblest dwelling. It is very little more work to leave the surface of the ground smooth after the final grading about the buildings than it is to leave it rough and uneven. Arrange if possible, to have a few inches of good loam on the surface when the grading is completed, and in any case, make a liberal application of well rotted stable manure. After thorough preparation and raking with a hand rake, seed very thickly, using three to five bushels of seed per acre. After the seed is sown, roll and if late in the season, or the soil is very dry, mulch with chaff or fine manure or leaf mould. Keep the grass closely clipped during the summer. In this way only can the weeds be kept down and a thick velvety turf be formed. In the latter part of the season it is well to let the grass become longer, for the double purpose of strengthening the roots and of serving as a mulch during the winter.

The best grasses for a lawn are Kentucky Blue Grass and Red Top, with a slight admixture of White Clover on heavy soils. Rhode Island Bent is also a valuable grass for heavy clay soils. On a sandy loam, Kentucky Blue Grass alone will be found as satisfactory as anything.

As to the care of the lawn but little need be said. In the spring it is well to rake off dead leaves and roll the ground, but the practice of burning over the lawn is not to be recommended. A lawn mower is necessary to insure good results, but a very good machine can be procured for $5, and the labor of mowing in this way is very light.

THE FLOWER GARDEN.

While, as a rule, better results may be obtained for the same expenditure of time and labor by using shrubs and perennials, the old fashined flower garden of our grandmothers is not out of place on the farm. In many cases the taste—or lack of taste—of the occupants of a home are here most vividly portrayed. I go to one place and the blaze of color is enough to blind one. Red reigns supreme! Geraniums, salvias and coleus vie with hollyhocks, phlox and poppies in the effort to dazzle the beholder, while possibly nasturtiums and zinnias endeavor to add color to the scene.

A neighbor may be of a sunny nature; in which case the yellows predominate. Buttercups, marigolds and sunflowers hold sway. Perhaps to please an odd fancy, Yellow Sweet Sultan holds a place in one corner and Golden Button timidly holds up its head in the background, while Tiger Lily and Hemerocallis dispute the right to exclusiveness.

Possibly a third neighbor is inclined to have the "blues," and then we find asters and larkspurs, bachelor's buttons, day lilies, irises and tradescantia galore.

How much better the effect would be if these different colors could be united and toned down, not thrown together in crazy patchwork, but harmonized. In general the "flower garden" should be at one side and a little to the rear of the house rather than directly in front. One suggestion with reference to the display of taste in arranging flowers should be made. Although "fashion" may sanction the practice, do not torture your neighbors by arranging a display of pots and kettles, wash-tubs and churns painted a glaring red, in solemn array before the house—as if to remind passers by of the blood of the martyrs.

WHAT TO PLANT.

The selection of trees and shrubs for planting is always perplexing. A few general principles may aid in solving the problem:

1. Do not attempt too much. Grounds that are crowded, even though the plants of themselves may be choice, have the appearance of an over-dressed person.

2. Do not discard native plants because they are "common." The oaks, maples, hickories and elms; the viburnums, dogwoods, roses and sumacs are unsurpassed in their respective classes. We might name further the hawthorns, the wild crab, the wild cherry and plum, the shadbush, the tamarack, the white ash and many others of special value and easy to be obtained.

3. Do not invest freely in untried things. If you have enterprising and experienced neighbors, consult with them before ordering nursery stock. Otherwise correspond with some reliable nursery firm or with some person in whose judgment you have confidence for advice in specific cases. It is usually safer to place an order directly with some reliable firm rather than with an agent. As a rule you will pay an agent 50 to 100 per cent more than the same goods would cost if purchased direct, and are less likely to receive them in good condition. It is often practicable for several neighbors to unite in sending an order and thus get wholesale rates.

4. In making a selection of flowering trees and shrubs, aim to secure a succession of bloom, in order that the grounds may be attractive all summer. Among the earliest flowering hardy shrubs are Daphne mezereum and the Forsythias which bloom before putting forth leaves—usually about the first of May. Following these shrubs are the Magnolias, the Red Bud or Judas Tree, the Hawthorns, the apple and the cherry among small trees. The magnolia will succeed only in the southern counties. Some of the best second early shrubs are the Azalias, Bush Honeysuckle,

Japan Quince, Double Flowering Plum, Flowering Almond, Lilacs in variety and the earlier Spiræas—especially *Van Houteii*, *prunifolia* and *Thunbergii*. A little later come the Weigelas and Mock Orange (*Philadelphus*) and the Japanese *Rosa rugosa*. In late summer we have the late Spiræas—as *Bumalda*, *Billardi*, *Callosa*, etc.,—the "Smoke Bush" (*Rhus cotinus*) and, best of all for massing, the hardy Hydrangea.

The brightness produced by bulbs and hardy perennials will well repay a small outlay in this direction. In earliest spring we have the Christmas Rose (*Helleborus niger*), the Snowdrops (*Galanthus*,) Crocuses and Pansies. A little later Tulips and Hyacinths appear, and these are followed by Columbines, Lily-of-the-Valley, "Bleeding Heart" (*Dicentra*) and Peony. In summer and early fall, the Japan Anemone, the Golden Columbine (*Aquilegia Chrysantha*) the Foxglove, Hollyhock, Plantain Lily (*Funkia*) and the numerous species and varieties of true lilies are all very effective and are easy of culture.

WHEN TO PLANT.

But for the difficulty of obtaining well matured stock in the fall, I should advocate setting most trees and shrubs in September and October; because of this difficulty, however, spring planting is usually advisable. All planting should be done just as early in the spring as possible, that the trees or shrubs may become well established before the leaves are put forth.

Hardy herbaceous perennials such as phlox, digitalis, hollyhock, columbine, etc., should, as a rule, be planted in September. The same is true of most bulbous plants, including the crocus, hyacinth, lilies, tulips, etc. The gladiolus is usually set in spring.

HOW TO PLANT.

In working with trees and shrubs, remember that a plant is a living organism and is as truly sensitive to neglect or ill treatment as is an animal. In handling nursery stock, always be careful to keep the roots moist. When received from the nursery the bundles should at once be opened and the plants carefully "heeled in." In case any of the plants are very dry and withered, they should be completely covered with earth for several days. In this way many plants which if set immediately would die, may be saved.

In removing plants from the nursery, many of the roots will necessarily be injured, rendering the plant unable to supply the moisture lost by evaporation from the leaf surface. Hence the top of the tree or shrub should be severely cut back at the time of transplanting.

As a rule, a tree or shrub should not be set deeper than it sat before removal and the hole should be large enough so that none of the roots need be cramped. If the soil is not in good condition, the labor of carting in good loam, in which to set the plants, will be well expended.

If but few trees or shrubs are to be set, it is well to use water in settling the earth about the roots. In any case, tramp the soil firmly and leave a slight mound about the base of the tree.

If the season is late, or if the soil is very dry, the roots should always be mulched. Any coarse litter that will shade the ground will answer for this purpose—coarse manure, leaves, straw, sawdust or even boards, will answer.

ARRANGEMENT.

The effective arrangement of trees and shrubs is often a most difficult problem. One of the first things to accomplish is the screening of outbuildings and other unsightly objects. The best plants for this purpose are evergreens—especially those which appear best at a distance, as Norway Spruce, Austrian Pine or Arbor vitae (white cedar.) It is not necessary that the planting be done in formal belts or hedges. Irregular groups, so arranged that the view is obstructed, are better than formal hedges. A trellis covered with vines may often be made effective and attractive as a screen.

There may properly be a border of low growing shrubbery next to the house and it is well to plant a vine of some sort by the piazza. Nothing is better for this purpose than the common woodbine or Virginia Creeper. Akebia and Actinidia, two new Japanese climbers are also good. In general, a better effect is produced by planting in masses and borders, than by dotting the plants here and there over the lawn. By the first method a picture is created with the residence as the central object, and one sees the grounds as a whole. The other method is meaningless and the effect produced is that of an orchard or nursery.

SOME NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS VALUABLE FOR PLANTING.

The following list of trees and shrubs includes only those which are most common in our forests and which may thus be obtained at slight expense.

EVERGREEN TREES.

- Arbor Vitae, or White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*, L.).
- Hemlock (*Tsuga Canadensis*, Carr.).
- Pine, White (*Pinus strobus*, L.).
- Pine, Norway (*P. resinosa*, Ait.).
- Spruce, White (*Picea alba*, Link.).
  - Black (*P. niger*, Link.).

EVERGREEN SHRUBS.

- Juniper (*Juniperus communis*, L.)
- Laurel, Mountain Laurel, (*Kalmia latifolia*, L.).
- Laurel, Sheep Laurel, (*Kalmia augustifolia*, L.).

DECIDUOUS TREES.

- Ash, White (*Fraxinus Americana*, L.).
- Basswood (*Tilia Americana*, L.).
- Beech (*Fagus ferruginea*, Ait.).
- Birch, Black or Cherry B. (*Betula lenta*, L.).
- Birch, Yellow B. (*Betula lutea*, Michx.).
  - Gray B. *Betula populifolia*, Ait.).
- Bird Cherry (*Prunus Pennsylvanica*, L.).
- Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*, Ehrh.).
- Chestnut (*Castanea Americana*, Watson).
- Elm, White or American (*Ulmus Americana*, L.).
- Hawthorn (*Cratægus coccinea*, L.).
- Hackmatack, Tamarack or "Juniper" (*Larix Americana*, Michx.).
- Maple, Rock or Sugar M. (*Acer saccharinum*, Wang.).
  - White or Silver M. (*Acer dasycarpum*, Ehrh.).
  - Red, Soft or Swamp M. (*Acer rubrum*, L.).
- Mountain Ash (*Pyrus Americana*, DC.).
- Oak, White (*Quercus Alba*, L.).
  - Scarlet (*Quercus coccinea*, Wang.).
- Plum, "Pomegranate" (*Prunus Americana*, Marsh.).

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS.

- Black Alder or Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*, Gray.).
- Chokeberry (*Pyrus arbutifolia*, L.).
- Choke-cherry (*Prunus Virginiana*, L.).
- Dockmackie or Maple-leaved Arrow-wood (*Viburnum acerifolium*, L.).
- Dogwood, Red Osier (*Cornus stolonifera*, Michx.).
- Elder, Common or Black E. (*Sambucus Canadensis*, L.).
  - Red E. (*Sambucus racemosus*, L.) (?)
- High-bush Cranberry (*Viburnum Opulus*, L.).
- Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*, Michx.).
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliata*, Muhl.).
  - (*Diervilla trifida*, Moench.)
- Meadowsweet (*Spiraea salicifolia*, L.).
- Mountain Maple (*Acer spicatum*, Lam.).
- Mountain Holly (*Nemopanthes fascicularis*, Raf.).
- New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus Americanus*, L.).
- Rose (*Rosa blanda* Ait.).
  - (*Rosa lucida*, Ehrh.).
  - (*Rosa humilis*, Marsh.).
- Sheep Berry (*Viburnum Lentago*, L.).
- Staghorn Sumach (*Rhus typhina*, L.).
- Thimble Berry (*Rubus odoratus*, L.).
- Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis Virginiana*, L.).

CLIMBING VINES.

- Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*, L.).
- Clematis, Virgin's Bower (*Clematis Virginiana*, L.).
- Grape (*Vitis Labrusca*, L.).
- Virginia Creeper (*Ampelopsis quinquefolia*, Michx.).